

## **A pleasant surprise**

As recalled by NFX412 Captain Vivi Bignold

We have all had experiences which on reflection continue to give us great warmth and pleasure. One such experience occurred to me after I had left the 2/5 AGH.

I had been posted to the 2/12 AGH and the Unit was travelling on the Hospital Ship *Manunda*, to Balikpapan via Morotai Island. I, of course, knew that the 2/5 AGH was stationed on Morotai, but did not know if it would be possible for me to contact or visit them.

As we approached the Island, a small boat came out to the ship and much to my surprise and delight, I caught sight of the familiar figures of Colonel Murray and Matron Cook. After suitable greetings - and I still don't know how it was arranged, but I presume suitable words were exchanged between the two COs and the two Matrons - I soon found myself going ashore to spend the time we were to be in Morotai with my old Unit.

It was a most warming experience, as I was made feel very welcome - I felt as if I was coming home, especially when I found I was to share a tent with my former tentmates Bon Aveling and Dulcie Deacon. I remember waking up the first night, and being quite certain I had imbibed too well - as across the dirt floor I could see an upturned wash basin moving at quite a steady pace.

On wakening Bon and Dulcie, I was reassured that it was only a land crab caught under the basin!!

The time passed all too quickly, and it was I think on the third day that I was returned to the *Manunda* for the onward trip to Balikpapan.

I doubt whether Colonel Murray or Matron Cook ever realised how much pleasure and happiness they had given me, and continue to do so. It may be this type of example, set by them, which has been responsible for the great comradeship that exists in the Unit.

But then of course, I am prejudiced.

Editor's note: In May 1940, when the first batch of nursing sisters enlisted in the Australian Army Medical Corps and were assigned to the 2/5 AGH, ten were sent to Ingleburn Army Camp for specialist training, and included in these were Vivi Bignold, Bon Aveling and Dulcie Deacon.